

October 31, 2005

For Bloggers Seeking Name Recognition, Nothing Beats a Good Scandal

By [TOM ZELLER Jr.](#)

It's a fair bet that, given a political scandal of a certain scale, the usual blogs - DailyKos, AmericaBlog, Instapundit and Wonkette - will draw traffic and links. Make it a media scandal, like [Dan Rather's](#) "60 Minutes" fiasco or Jayson Blair's fabrications at The New York Times, and other sites might bubble to the top: Romenesko or perhaps Gawker for a snideways view of things. And why not? As in any other medium, branding matters, and these sites have proven their mettle in scandals past.

But the blogosphere is expanding at a rate of 70,000 sites a day, according to Technorati, the blog search portal, which now tracks activity on more than 20 million blogs in real time - and the right bit of news can always catapult new sites into the limelight.

Ariana Huffington's relentless drubbing of Judith Miller, the [New York Times](#) reporter, drove the relatively new [HuffingtonPost.com](#) high into Technorati's rankings. Her site's popularity continued right through Friday's indictment of I. [Lewis Libby](#), the White House staff member accused of making false statements during an investigation into the leak of a Central Intelligence Agency operative's name. At day's end, roughly 20 new links per hour were being made to HuffingtonPost.com.

"I would say that's a pretty significant blogometric pressure," said David L. Sifry, the chief executive of Technorati.

The White House leak scandal has put some other sites on the map even though they lack Ms. Huffington's name recognition. Steven C. Clemons, a fellow at the New America Foundation, drew a fair amount of cross-linking to his blog, the Washington Note ([thewashingtonnote.com](#)), with reliable coverage throughout the affair. So too did the group blog FireDogLake ([firedoglake.blogspot.com](#)), which drew nearly 200 comments in just 90 minutes after a post about the news conference held by the special prosecutor in the leak case, Patrick J. Fitzgerald, Friday afternoon. And with some original reporting on the affair last week, the JustOneMinute blog, run by Tom Maguire ([justoneminute.typepad.com](#)), was identified by Technorati as an "aggregation point" for chatter on the topic.

"This is kind of like a look into the global subconscious," Mr. Sifry said, "when you can expose what people are looking for."

Alas, competition for attention on the Web is stiff. Behind the Libby indictment, the most-discussed headline at the close of business Friday: "CNN - George Takei, Trek's Sulu: I'm gay." TOM ZELLER JR.

